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Thirtieth Anniversary of the Foundation of the Harrison Square Church, Dorchester District, Boston, Mass., Oct. 13, 1878:

A

SERMON

BY

CALEB D. BRADLEE, PASTOR.

"ASK NOW OF THE DAYS THAT ARE PASSED."
Deut. iv., 32.

BOSTON:
FRED. W. BARRY, 108 & 110 WASHINGTON ST.
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1. Brooks.
2. Williams.
3. Johnson.
4. Bulfinch.
5. Marvin.
6. Hinckley.
7. Badger.
8. Seaver.
9. Bradlee.

SERMON.

DEUT. iv., 32:—"ASK NOW OF THE DAYS THAT ARE PASSED."

THIS month brings us to the thirtieth anniversary of the foundation of our church, and we are now thirty years old amongst the churches in Boston,—and we possess something of a history, and have pleasant and touching and sacred memories to recall, with joys and sorrows in quick succession marching before the mind, and evoking our smiles or our tears; and pictures arise to vision that are blended irrevocably with our household life;—infants receiving the baptismal waters from some hand perhaps not now alive in the flesh; many hearts joined together by those no longer pastors of this flock; many chambers of sickness and homes of sorrow hallowed by prayers that never more can be uttered by official lips in our behalf;—ah, yes, these pictures come up of a past that can never be re-enacted, of forms and affections and relationships, and loving parishioners and faithful pastors, and various successes or failures that are simply now a record; but a record that is stamped beautifully upon these walls and upon these pews and upon our hearts, and a record that

gives us a communion not only with many who are living in various parts of the world, but with a large company who are gathered together at the throne of Almighty God.

In 1848 it was found that the church on the hill — then under the loving care of that faithful and apostolic shepherd, NATHANIEL HALL — was overflowing with numbers, and hardly large enough to accommodate the residents of all parts of Dorchester, and having no room for the new-comers who were perpetually choosing their homes in this delightful locality; and so, too, many of the members of the old parish, who lived a great distance from the sanctuary, felt more and more the difficulty of attending service, and the need of a temple nearer to their own dwellings; and at that time also political excitement ran high, and holy men belonged to all of the parties, and were equally conscientious and earnest, and of strong minds and of loving souls, and yet diametrically opposite in opinion, and advocating measures that could never be reconciled; and mainly for these three reasons I have named, — the overflowing of the ancient meeting-house, the great distance of the homes of some of the old parish, and the mighty but sincere political antipathies, — the Harrison Square Church came into life.

We are informed that the meeting-house in which we now worship, and which the seceders from the old church purchased *already built*, was erected through the instrumentality of the Rev.

Stephen Bailey, being at first designed by him for the use of a Trinitarian Congregational Society. The land for its erection was purchased in 1845, and the building completed at an expense of over $7,366, and it was dedicated in the summer of 1846, and for about two years remained under the charge of Mr. Bailey.

The Unitarian gentlemen who purchased the building in 1848 paid for the same $5,500, and the *first* organization under the auspices of another sect thus became forever extinct.

At a meeting of the stockholders of the church, October, 1848, it was voted to raise a committee who should wait upon the Rev. Messrs. Hall and Pike, and assure them that the new movement was not from any opposition to them or to their societies.

The first preacher in the church in its new shape was the Rev. CHARLES BROOKS, who was followed by the Rev. FRANCIS WILLIAMS for a year, and by Rev. SAMUEL JOHNSON for a few months. Mr. Brooks's good name was in all the churches, and Mr. Williams has since become a useful and successful preacher in Hyde Park, and Mr. Johnson is known in our community for his great scholarship and his fearless independence. As Brother Williams almost became the "pastor" of this church, and stood in this pulpit so long, and is remembered by so many of you with grateful respect, it becomes my duty as well as my pleasure to say, that when he left your service you not only

liberally remunerated him for his labors, but also presented to him, as a mark of your good-will and friendly wishes, a silver pitcher and salver; and these valuable gifts are now carefully kept by him and his family, and stand witness in his house of the blessed twelve months that he consecrated to your service.

Our society, however, did not really take shape till 1854, when all the interest in the property represented by the old stockholders was purchased by a new set of men, and when an act of incorporation was quickly obtained.

The first minister under the new plan — although for two years he had been preaching in this place — was the Rev. S. G. BULFINCH, afterward the Rev. Dr. Bulfinch, who served at this altar nearly eleven years, from August, 1852, to July, 1863.

Rev. Dr. Bulfinch was born in Boston, June 18, 1809, and, at the age of nine years, was taken by his father to the city of Washington. He graduated from Columbia College in 1827, and this college also conferred the degree of Doctor of Divinity upon their distinguished graduate in 1864. Mr. Bulfinch first became a clergyman in Augusta, Ga., and afterwards kept school and preached in Pittsburgh, Pa., and in Washington. Subsequently he was settled in Nashua, N. H., and in 1852 returned to Boston, when soon, with all his ripe talents, his extensive influence, his large heart, his noble soul, his beautiful spirit, his fine poetic taste, and his ripe theological attainments, he was called to ser-

vice in Harrison Square, — a place he always loved, a place he never should have left, — where his noblest powers were exhibited, his most finished taste displayed, his fine spirit made known, his true unction published, and the beauty and the splendor and the holiness of his character declared. It is because his voice was heard here, and his best works accomplished here, and his rich spirit hovers here, that I have been encouraged ever since I called you my people; for I have felt his power, and somewhat held his hand, and almost heard him speak, and say, "Work on, for success is sure; and the Lord Jesus will help you;" or he has almost said in his own poetic words, —

"Hath not thy heart within thee burned,
At evening's calm and holy hour,
As if its inmost depths discerned
The presence of a loftier power?

"It was the voice of God that spake
In silence to thy silent heart;
And bade each worthier thought awake,
And every dream of earth depart."

If you ask me was Dr. Bulfinch an eloquent preacher, I shall answer both yes and no. He had the eloquence of the spirit, — the power of expression that arises out of an earnest and loving heart, and is always the result of a clear and positive and consecrated judgment. His delivery may not have been in full accordance with all the laws of a finished oratory, and yet it was in accordance

with the best rules of speaking, for it was natural and glowing, and full of sweetness and grace.

He was also an author widely known and appreciated, and several are the works that remain with us as his glorious mausoleum. Do you not remember some of their names, and have you not read them with joy and with pride? "Contemplations of the Savior," "The Holy Land," "Lays of the Gospel," "Communion Thoughts," "The Harp and the Cross," and the "Evidences of Christianity."

Dr. Bulfinch, during his ministry in this church, officiated at twenty-six weddings and at sixty-nine funerals; and it was also through his kind spirit and catholic heart that you were led at one time to invite the parish, under the care of the Rev. Dr. Means, to occupy your church when the Second Church was undergoing repairs;—and the correspondence between Brothers Means and Bulfinch was of such a character as proves that the souls of both these men were sanctified by the grace of God.

Saintly brother! who, eight years ago yesterday, passed to God; your memory in this church shall always be fresh, and stand guard, we beseech thee, if God in Christ permits, over us in all our future days!

In January, 1865, the Rev. J. B. Marvin took charge of the flock, and remained here two years, till January, 1867, and still lives doing good and faithful work outside of the ministry in the city of Washington. Many of you, without doubt,

remember him with pleasure and parted from him with regret, and will be glad to know that for so many years he has stood strong and honored and beloved at another post of duty.

The Rev. FREDERICK HINCKLEY succeeded Mr. Marvin, becoming pastor March 1, 1867, and leaving us in July, 1870, for the city of Washington, after a service of more than three years. Mr. Hinckley was born in Boston, Nov. 3, 1820. Previously to entering upon this charge he had been settled in various prominent pulpits all over this part of the country, and had attracted great notice and admiration for his eloquence, his earnestness, his courage, and his great pulpit powers. He preached very frequently without notes, and would hold in splendid captivity a large number of attentive listeners. During a part of his ministry here the church was amazingly well filled, and everywhere the gifts of the orator, scholar, and preacher were cordially acknowledged. He went from us because called to the capital of the nation, to the Metropolitan Church; but we are always ready to give him a cordial greeting.

The Rev. Prof. HENRY C. BADGER followed Mr. Hinckley in January, 1871, and remained with you till December, 1873, nearly two years. Mr. Badger was born in Munroe County, New York, fifteen miles from Rochester, having a father and mother of unusual intellect and heart. He began to keep school in western New York when eighteen years old, although up to that time he was mainly the

educator of himself. He entered Genesee College at twenty years of age, and from thence he went to Amherst, and then to Antioch, where he graduated in 1857; and a year later, when only twenty-five, became a professor in that college. He was ordained in East Cambridge in 1862. He preached in New Bedford awhile, also in California; passed through several severe attacks of sickness, established a school in Boston, and became your helper and leader. You all remember him gladly, you all loved him deeply, you all speak of him kindly, you all wept when he wept, — and when a severe domestic trial brought about his departure, your hearts and your prayers and your sympathies went with him. He has again taken up ministerial work, and may Almighty God abundantly bless his earnest labors.

In May, 1874, the Rev. NATHANIEL SEAVER, Jr., followed Mr. Badger, and he remained with you till September, 1875, having supplied your pulpit three months before his settlement. Mr. Seaver was my warm and personal friend. I united him in marriage to the one who has always proved such a light to his home and such a benediction to the church; and I would like to speak of his ministry at length, and with enthusiasm, but by his own command I am silent, — for he says to me, in a note, that he dislikes all notice of himself during life; and that all he wishes that I should say is that he served the church for eighteen months, — and therefore I cannot speak of his

great zeal, of his unceasing labors, and of his loving heart.

After the departure of Mr. Seaver, Mr. HOSEA H. LINCOLN, of East Boston, took charge of the services, and, either in person or by supply, kept up religious instruction in this place; and it is needless for me to say that Mr. Lincoln is well known in this community as a man of finished culture, of commanding eloquence, and a preacher readily received in all our pulpits.

In March, 1876, the present incumbent began his work, and in June of the same year was publicly announced as the pastor of this church and society. He came to you promising nothing, and expecting no great results until after many years of hard and anxious waiting and working, and feeling that it was an hour of great depression in the history of this church; and yet he had some hope, because the few whose hearts were not sick stood so faithfully by the old ark. We have been abundantly blessed. We are now a large and strong and earnest society; and you have worked hard and well and gloriously, and to *you* this day I give publicly the praise due for your unceasing labors, your cordial sympathy, your kind interest in my welfare, and your constant and large attendance upon my ministrations. Again I say, if anything has been done, I call upon all to give the credit to my people. And this I gladly say to-day, that the happiest years of my life have been spent with you, my loved parishioners; and the deepest

affections of my heart have clung to this spot, and you have always seemed to me as one family in the Lord; and your homes have been my home, and my home has been your home; and we have had nothing, and we have allowed nothing but peace and fellowship. And this also I know, if my future days shall be as blessed as my past ones, I have nothing before me but joy and success and comfort and benediction.

Now let us look awhile at the congregations that have from time to time assembled here; and at the Sunday School, that has been kept up for about thirty years; and at the various changes in the church building, and at any other items necessarily connected with the growth of this society and church.

Enough people have belonged to our society, since the building was erected, to make four good societies as large and as prosperous as our present one. In fact we have sent some choice material *back* to Meeting-House Hill as a partial payment for the numbers that left that church in 1848; and from us have marched, in solid procession, a large number of earnest and true and noble men and women, who are now working with zeal and charity, and love for God and Christ and man, to build up and sustain and consecrate our sister church, St. John's, — now so well supplied by that lineal descendant of the loving apostle, whose name stands high in all the churches and colleges for scholarship and integrity and devotion, — the one for

whom the lamented Starr King felt such a deep and reverent and earnest affection. Then, too, we have sent to other churches of all names, in many of the towns and cities of Massachusetts, the sons or daughters of this Christian household who have sought other places of residence, or who have changed their faith, or who have gone with their new companion to set up another altar. And also up in the Celestial City, have gone from our ranks the aged, those in mid-life, and little children; fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, — rich in virtues, abundant in charities, of keen intellect and large heart and great capacity, and earnest affection for this church. They have passed from us, one by one, until now there is really a duplicate church that we can call ours holding services in the city of the New Jerusalem, and waiting patiently till we, too, shall join their numbers, and celebrate with them their holy thanksgivings. All hail! brothers and sisters on the other side of the river; fill this sacred building now with your spiritual forms, and give us such a blessing that never-failing prosperity may abide within these walls forever and ever!

Our Sunday School, under the excellent charge of Messrs. Carter and Snow and Sawyer and Horne and others, has been doing a good and noble and holy work; and has sent out into the world regiments of young men and women, filled with good principles, fortified by noble faith, established as disciples of the Lord, and beautifully furnished

for all strong words and deeds. The band of teachers who have met here from week to week, with patience and courage and love, will rejoice with great joy when out of God's mighty "Book of Record" they shall read how the seed that they have sown has brought forth some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.

This building in which we now worship has passed through a great many changes, so as hardly to be the same place that was purchased by our predecessors so many years ago. Formerly you entered by a central door to your pews, and your organ was high up in the air; and this place, where the pulpit stands, was unknown, and the pews that were formerly on the right and left of the pulpit have disappeared; and the skill of the painter has renewed your walls, and the vestry below, formerly a cave, is now almost a parlor, being changed from a dark recess by the magic touch of thousands of dollars. Outside of the church, too, we notice improvements and beauties and advantages not before possessed. "Enough has been spent," said one of your number, "upon this structure to have formed a sum large enough for the building of a fine temple unto God." But I am glad, for one, that the old building was saved, — for precious memories gather here, and the music of other days makes sacred these walls and these pews.

I should hardly be true to a discourse of this kind did I not mention our entertainments and our sales and our concerts, and all the movements by

which we have secured large revenues for expenses and repairs; — and here, just here, the sisters of the church deserve unlimited praise, for to them mainly is the honor due that we live to-day; that we have accomplished so much, and that our hope has never died out. Woman was not only in ancient times first at the cross and last at the tomb, but ever since she has been the most ready to take up the "cross" and to change it into a "crown." Many have been the dark days in our history at a time when I was not acquainted with this place, and, had it not been then for the gentle sex, this whole society would have vanished out of sight. But these earnest ones said, when trouble came, that they would not run away affrighted, but would stand the fire and fight the fight; and by faith, and by work, and by love bring about a grand and a holy and a glorious resurrection.

Ere I close, I would speak once more of the Rev. Stephen Bailey, the first minister of this church when it carried the name of another denomination. I want to speak of him because he sacrificed so much in order to build up a flourishing parish in Harrison Square. He gave away large sums of money, two years' preaching, and an immense amount of strength, that he might succeed in his grand design; but he failed, and yet such a failure as that was worthy of all admiration, because it seems as if all that man could do he did, and I would like to have the name of "Bailey" placed somewhere where we all could see it from week to

week, and then, perhaps, seeing our affection and admiration and respect, he would come back in spirit, and secretly but earnestly bless us.

But, friends, I must pause. I do not want to weary you, but only let me say, God bless you, one and all; God bless this dear old church, and all who have ever belonged to it during the past thirty years of its strange, eventful, but glorious life!

CHURCH AT HARRISON SQUARE.

1848. 1878.

BY C. D. BRADLEE.

In 'forty-eight this church began
Its holy work for God and man;
And BROOKS at first the Word did give,
That needy souls might wake and live!

And WILLIAMS next this place did fill,
Longing to do his Father's will.
Twelve months he spoke the Word with power;
Kindly we speak his name this hour.

And JOHNSON, too, with mind all bright,
Anxious for truth and wanting light,
Awhile held service in this place,
With earnest words and loving face.

Then BULFINCH came, the man of peace,—
Our love for him will never cease;
Long will the gentle, holy heart
On all our souls fresh strength impart.

MARVIN followed this child of God,—
Took up his staff and held his rod;
And when he felt the task too great,
Left us all for a distant State.

HINCKLEY took up the waiting field,
With tongue of fire a force did wield,
And large crowds came to hear him speak
Of holy truths from week to week.

But soon he went, and BADGER came,—
A man of thought and college fame;
He stood on guard till trial fell,
How great and sharp no words can tell!

To SEAVER then the work was given,
To guide the waiting soul to heaven;
And filled with zeal and love and power,
Nobly he toiled from hour to hour.

His name we 'll ever speak with love,
And when we look to God above,
We 'll pray, wherever he may go,
Blessings upon his life may flow.

And BRADLEE, — coming days must say
Of good or ill, as best they may;
For he himself must silent be,
And leave his fate to history.

Rev. CHARLES BROOKS.
Rev. FRANCIS C. WILLIAMS.
Rev. SAMUEL JOHNSON.
Rev. Dr. S. G. BULFINCH.
Rev. J. B. MARVIN.
Rev. FREDERICK HINCKLEY.
Rev. Prof. HENRY C. BADGER.
Rev. NATHANIEL SEAVER, Jr.
Rev. CALEB D. BRADLEE.

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